



Rebuilding Afghanistan

Weekly Activity Update for March 31 – April 6
Issue 53

United States Agency for International Development

STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT

Program Goals

- Support the Bonn process: the Constitutional, Human Rights, and Judicial Commissions; the 2004 elections; and a free and independent media.
- Strengthen government budgeting, revenue generation (e.g., customs), monetary management, private-sector related legal and regulatory frameworks, and promote private enterprises.
- Build capacity to carry out other legitimate government functions and support reconstruction of health, judicial, education, economic, agricultural and transportation infrastructure.

Recent Progress:

- **Afghanistan's Independent Media Grows:** Afghanistan's growing media plays an essential part in transforming the country into a free, open and democratic society; and the AINA Media and Culture Center in Kabul, jointly funded by USAID and other donors, celebrated two milestones this week. First, eleven students, four women and seven men, graduated from the center's two-year photojournalist training course. Second, the AINA Photojournalism Institute, Afghanistan's first photojournalist press agency, was turned over to Afghan management. Mr. Reza Deghati, a renowned National Geographic photojournalist and president and co-founder of AINA, presided over a ceremony celebrating both events.
- **Afghanistan to join the World Customs Organization (WCO):** The Ministry of Finance for the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan will soon become a member of the World Customs Organization. The decision to join the WCO indicates the confidence the transitional government has in the future of its customs reforms. Over 170 nations are members of the World Customs Organization, which sets all international standards relating to customs administration, including duty assessments, enforcement techniques, statistical standards for the collection of trade data, and administrative procedures for various international trade policies. Membership will provide Afghanistan with access to bilateral and multilateral technical assistance and training, membership in regional and international customs programs and activities including intelligence sharing, and cross-border cooperation on facilitating trade. This is a significant step in the commitment of the government to move forward with the customs reform program that began 18 months ago as part of the USAID economic governance project. Afghanistan will take its place as a member at the WCO's June council session.
- **The Greening of Kabul:** USAID contributed over \$990,000 toward Kabul's "Green Week," which was initiated during the first week of Afghanistan's New Year (Nouroz). Green Week events include the planting of 850,000 trees in the city of Kabul, an education campaign on how to improve one's environment, and a community fair. Many Kabul residents will receive a tree to plant outside their homes as a symbol of Nouroz and prosperity. Ambassador Khalilzad stated that he hopes Green Week will become a nation-wide, annual event, from which Afghans in rural areas as well as the cities will benefit.



Reza Deghati awarding a diploma to graduating photojournalist Karima Malikzada.



USAID-purchased generator for Jalalabad customs house.



USAID Mission Director Jim Bever planting a tree during the launch of Kabul's Green Week.

STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT (CONTINUED)

Recent Progress (continued)

- **Kabul-Kandahar Highway:** After completing the first layer of asphalt on December 15, 2003, USAID has started paving the second layer of the highway, as well as constructing shoulders and putting up signage. USAID subcontractors in the northern sections of the highway continue working on shoulders and culvert extensions, while in the southern sections subcontractors are laying a second course of asphalt. USAID is also working to survey the newly paved highway using GPS equipment, ensuring a uniform coordinate system that will allow the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan to accurately maintain the highway.
- **Kandahar-Herat Highway:** USAID is reviewing the designs to reconstruct 100 km (62 miles) of the two most deteriorated sections of the highway. Beyond reconstruction of the 15 bridges located along this 100 km, the contractor is also reviewing designs to reconstruct four additional bridges. Because of poor design of the original bridge superstructures, and almost total lack of maintenance for decades, some of these bridges will require substantial repair work. Bridge and highway reconstruction is scheduled to begin later in the spring.



Embankment material at southern end of the Kabul-Kandahar Highway.



Paving of asphalt at southern end of Kabul-Kandahar Highway.

INCREASING ACCESS TO BASIC HEALTH CARE

Program Goals

- 400 health centers renovated or constructed in rural areas, providing services to an estimated 12 million people.
- 11 million beneficiaries assured improved access to basic services in 13 provinces; 4.4 million women and children given access to services through USAID's health care initiative grants.
- 3,400 new community health workers, 990 midwives, and 6,000 clinic staff trained.
- Make safe water systems, contraceptives, mosquito nets and other health products available at reasonable prices using existing trading and marketing systems.
- Strengthen MOH capacity at the national and provincial levels for guiding effective health care policy; develop a public health education program; determine a sustainable health finance policy; strengthen human resource development; improve hospital management; and expand and improve the HMIS.

Recent Progress:

Health Clinic Construction Announcement: On March 25, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad announced that USAID will complete work on 378 clinics by December 2004. This includes the rehabilitation of 150 existing clinics and the construction of 228 new clinics, of which 78 are already under construction. The Ambassador remarked, "Afghanistan has one of the poorest health records in the world today. Much of this is due to years of neglect to the basic health care system and to the years of strife this country has suffered. These clinics will expand essential health services to a minimum of 12 million people throughout the country." USAID is also working with the Ministry of Public Health to provide a basic package of health services that will reach 5.4 million people in 2004 alone. The package will include services for maternal and newborn health, child health and immunization, public nutrition, communicable diseases, disability and the supply of essential drugs.



President Karzai (right), Ambassador Khalilzad (center), and the Minister of Public Health Seddiq (left) presenting clinic reconstruction plan.



President Karzai announcing the reconstruction sites for clinics across Afghanistan. To the President's left are midwives recently trained by USAID.